

Mishaps Notes (for CO and SgtMaj spouses):

- ❖ Don't give details of mishap until family notifications have been given
 - Stay in contact with CO as much as possible, make sure he/she doesn't give you information that you don't want to or shouldn't know. This will help avoid putting you into any awkward positions of having to hide something or lie.
 - You may feel very isolated between knowing there has been a casualty and waiting to talk about it until notifications have been made; perhaps reach out to CO's boss' spouse for support.
 - In the beginning, it's best just to not answer your phone. It's better to screen voicemails and call back because you never know who could be calling and for what. ALL reporters should be directed to Public Affairs Office and/or CO.
- ❖ Delete (and make sure FRO deletes) spouses and family members involved from email, Evite, Facebook, etc. So that they aren't bombarded with mass emails and coordinating messages aren't hitting their inboxes as they grieve the loss of their Marine. You will send very personalized messages and phone calls to those involved.
- ❖ Designate an Officer's spouse and an Enlisted's spouse who are active on Facebook to monitor for inappropriate comments.
- ❖ The CACO Team that goes to the door should be made up of a Notifier, the actual CACO, and a Chaplain.
 - The Notifier should be a senior SNCO or Officer from the deceased Marine's unit.
 - The CACO can be a Marine from any unit who will not be deployed, TAD, or PCS within the next year so they can assist properly with the Next of Kin (NOK).
- ❖ The day of notification the CO, SgtMaj, FRO, and CO and SgtMaj spouse should travel to give condolences to local families. I recommend the CO wear his flight suit and the SgtMaj wear cammies. Anything more formal than this could be unsettling and anything more casual could be disrespectful. The goal of the visit is to give condolences, answer questions, and address any immediate needs. The CO should anticipate detailed questions of mishap and be able to answer in a direct, yet appropriate fashion.
- ❖ Two messages should go out from squadron
 - Message #1 says "Squadron XXX had a mishap, more details to follow."
 - Message #2 is a letter from the CO with more details
 - There can be a very long time gap between Message #1 and Message #2, as all circumstances of the mishap will come into play. For example, middle of the night, remote mountains, fuel leaking and rounds going off, finding a doctor to declare the deceased.
- ❖ Daily CACO Sync meetings where all involved CACOs and squadron representatives meet via teleconference to consolidate questions and learn between each other in order to be proactive with each family
- ❖ Assign Officer from squadron as "Squadron Liaison" AND assign spouse that family is comfortable with as "Spouse Liaison". This limits the number of people bombarding the families.
 - Squadron Liaison is someone who is a direct connection between squadron and family for things like how to get vehicle home, cleaning out locker, and specific squadron questions
 - Spouse Liaison is someone who the family is comfortable with delivering donations, watching kids, asking about needs, etc.
- ❖ Pull all spouses and Marines together 3-4 days after mishap to relay details, quash rumors, anger, fears, and promote healing with grief counseling.
- ❖ As you focus on the families directly affected, it is easy to lose sight of families who are indirectly affected. Get OSC/ESC together for a spontaneous meeting as soon as possible. Discuss some details of mishap, answer/take questions, turn towards volunteer efforts and support.

- ❖ Since I had young children, I immediately went to the base Child Development Center (CDC) and explained our unit's situation and I asked for help in booking my children. They were more than accommodating. Just ask!
- ❖ I highly encourage a calling tree within your OSC/ESC. Use your phone roster as a starting point. You call one person, and then it exponentially grows from there. Keep the message simple, such as "Check your email."
- ❖ Give list of memorial services, funerals, etc., but ask affected families if services are private or public and be sure to note this on your distributed list.
- ❖ Gather list of Trust Accounts set up for children and direct supporters on how to donate.
- ❖ Keep track of supporters/volunteers
 - Best to get email addresses, because it is almost impossible to spend time talking on the phone
 - You will use this list later for thank you letters
- ❖ There will be an overwhelming number of supporters, keep in mind that 'giving' is a part of the grieving process, and it's your job to make sure that needs and supporters are coordinated in an organized manner.
 - Get supporters to help with anything, even small tasks make a volunteer feel like they are contributing. Ex: making copies at Kinkos, delivering bins, cutting letter cards, gift baskets for traveling/visiting family members, etc.
- ❖ PIC (Partners In Command) is good for using their OSC to provide food to Marines working around the clock at the hangar.
 - I highly encourage you to use Evite to coordinate this event. Evite serves as an RSVP tool, as well as provides communication between all participants. Also, have supporters pick a specific day and one drop-off time to mitigate in-and-out traffic in hangar.
 - Be sure they bring plastic and paper ware.
- ❖ Ask for childcare volunteers during the Memorial Service for the families of the Fallen.
- ❖ Scrapbooks as gifts to parents, spouses, fiancés
 - Set up a table in the squadron for Marines to write letters to the Fallen
 - Ask for photos to be submitted via email: set up a separate email account, such as vengeancememorial@yahoo.com
 - Be sure to extend this offer to other squadrons via FROs or CO Spouses, make sure they know the deadline.
 - Send a message to all of the other CO spouses and FROs to pass asking for scrapbook volunteers. We had many scrapbookers show up to share their knowledge and their supplies. Perhaps ask a local church for an available conference room to use for assembling the scrapbooks.
 - Making the scrapbooks was two-fold, it allowed the volunteers to grieve together as well as provide a very personalized gift to the families.
- ❖ Put donation bins in a central location, such as MAG Headquarters' Building
 - Ask for specific needs and/or gift cards are always useful
 - For example, families made need bedding and air mattresses for visiting family, extra tables and chairs to accommodate visitors, baby items for unborn babies of the Fallen, extra paper products such as Kleenex, paper towels, toilet paper, plates, and utensils
 - Your spouse liaison will be the person responsible for emptying the bins and delivering the donations.
 - Be sure to list a cut-off date.
- ❖ Donated gift cards can be used to purchase items for the families such as specific needs and/or gift baskets
- ❖ Out-of-town baskets/bags are nice to put into hotel rooms of traveling family members.
 - Add a small condolence card, use a bag with the squadron patch, snacks, drinks, base map, etc.
- ❖ Find photo to enlarge for the canvas at the Memorial Service. This can be harder than you think, so don't wait until the last minute.

- ❖ The Memorial Garden over by the MAG-39 Headquarters' Building has a monument with the names of the Fallen. (Unsure if anything similar at other bases.)
- ❖ After the ceremony and trip to the Memorial Garden, the CO presents the families with memorial items in a more private setting. Shadow boxes, scrapbooks, etc.
- ❖ Highly encourage giving the flight helmets to the Fallen Marine's children.
- ❖ Compassion Fares: reduced airfare for verified funeral services via airlines, you just need to ask
- ❖ It's very important to remember that not every family is the same, there is no template way to handle a casualty. You will need to follow your gut, listen to families who are the closest with the Fallen's families, and get a feel for the responsiveness from the Fallen's families. It's important to reach out, but it's equally important to know when you may need to back-off and revisit at a later date.

These are simply notes from our experience, please feel free to substitute the ground equivalent references and note that things that worked for us, may not work for you.

Feel free to message me with any questions: sasha.lightfoot@hotmail.com